

IMPERIAL DEFENCE

1588-1914

BY

COL. J. F. C. FULLER, D.S.O.

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PREFACE.

SINCE the Armistice of November 11, 1918, when military action ceased and diplomatic action began, the world has been plunged into a sea of words, truth has been obscured, and, in my own mind, there is little doubt that, to-day, very few can think clearly on the vital problem of Imperial defence.

This problem is visibly an immense one, and never before, in the whole course of our history, has it been so complex as it is to-day. The map of Europe has been changed, small backward countries have been revived, and not only is Europe seething with warlike irritants, but science is daily adding new weapons to the armoury of war.

The submarine and the aeroplane have changed the whole of our Imperial military and naval outlook, so much so that, from the point of view of defence, England is no longer an island, and the sea communications between her and the Dominions, India and the Colonies are becoming less and less secure. Where are we Imperially? To-day no man can say, for all issues are obscured in wordy conferences. The newspapers tell us as much as they can gather, but behind it all we cannot help feeling that the great lessons of the past are being

forgotten, and that we are fast slipping back into that lethargy which characterized the first half of the last century.

In the past this lethargy has been costly enough, but in the future it may well prove disastrous. In the past, our immense wealth, under cover of our fleet, has enabled us during war time to make good our peace deficits in war preparations. Since the advent of the aeroplane, our fleet can no longer so fully protect this wealth, and without iron to secure it, it is simply gold.

Where are we, and what are we to do? I think that the first thing we should do is to look back and examine the past, and in the past attempt to discover the principles which have governed the evolution of our Empire. It is with this object in view that I have written this brief study. In it there is nothing new, I claim no discovery, but I feel that, as many soldiers have so little time to spend on reading, and especially on reading thick volumes on Imperial history, a brief account of the growth of Imperial defence up to the outbreak of the Great War may be of some interest.

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IMPERIAL DEFENCE

I.

The Principles of Imperial Policy

WHEN we read the histories of foreign empires, kingdoms, and republics of the past and present, and compare them to our own there can be little doubt that, for warlike fervour, few nations have equalled the English; and, paradoxical as it may seem, the reason is that, of all nations, we are the staunchest lovers of peace. So ardent is our affection that, whilst scorning militarism—the antagonist of peacefulness—we are ever ready to draw the sword to protect our mistress—Domestic Tranquillity.

In the days of the Heptarchy, England was virtually a small continent of small nations with Wessex as the paramount power. The instinct of expansion, in order to maintain domestic peace in Wessex, emanated from Winchester, and by the year 828 the English became a nation. Once Wales was subjected, England was left with but one short frontier, the easily defensible lands between Berwick and Carlisle, and the problem of the main-

tenance of domestic peace in England was a far easier one than that of any nation on the continent of Europe. When union with Scotland was accomplished, the entire frontiers of the realm became surrounded by the ocean, and an all but unattackable frontier was gained. Nearly contemporaneous with the establishment of this boundary do we find the instinct of expansion urging the English beyond their shores.

Expansion prevented decadence, it enabled hostile minorities to escape from tyrannical majorities, it supplied a vent for adventurers, those truculent hunters after Eldorados who, if forcedly kept at home, revolt against their surroundings. So we find, if we study our history, that, during peace time, the majority rule at home guaranteed tranquillity by the brute-force which every majority depends upon, until Charles I infringed the Constitution by placing himself above the will of the majority of his people. The Civil Wars which resulted, are in their turn followed by a great Imperial expansion under Cromwell. This expansion carrying with it as a necessity command of the sea, which, in the Dutch Wars of the seventeenth century, passed to England, and has ever since remained an instrument of peace in the hands of the British nations.

From the close of the seventeenth century onwards, we see the frontiers of Great Britain pushed out to the shore lines of the world. Yet as sea-power alone cannot guarantee the integrity of overseas possessions, under Cromwell we see developing, more definitely than in the days which preceded him, the theory that international war may be restricted by the institution of a balance of power between civilized nations. In other words, whichever nation on the Continent of Europe was most aggressive, a ring of weaker nations was to be drawn around it, whose united power was greater than its own. Similarly, as domestic peace within a nation is maintained by physical force residing in the hands of the majority of the people, so also was international peace to be maintained by a majority of nations which, through preparedness for war and a threat to use physical force, kept in check the aggressive tendencies of the would-be aggressor.

From the days of the Great Protector to the present, the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe has formed the keystone of British foreign policy except for short periods of pacifity which have invariably been followed by international conflict. In itself, the maintenance of the balance of power between the nations of Europe (and its enforce-

ment when it has been threatened or infringed) has guaranteed the integrity of the Empire as a whole, but it cannot secure distant portions of the Empire against local attack. Consequently, we find the instinct of expansion in full operation in our overseas possessions and Colonies, until their frontiers are pushed out to impassable obstacles. In the cases of Australia and New Zealand the sea is ultimately reached in all directions; in the case of India the Himalaya mountains and the Indus and later on the Hindu-Kush have secured the country against foreign invasion. Further, as an Empire, we have never tolerated the rise of powerful nations on our land frontiers, or, where such already exist, we have been careful not to stimulate their fear by establishing armed forces in their vicinity. In 1899, in the case of our South African Colonies, we went to war with the Transvaal and Orange Free State not because of our interests in the gold fields, this was but a pretext, but because the existence of Cape Colony, Natal and Rhodesia were threatened by the rise of military powers on their frontiers. In Canada we have never urged the Dominion Government to increase its armed forces beyond its domestic requirements, for every increase would be a direct threat to the United States, the northern frontier of which,

on account of the military weakness of Canada, is safer than those of Bengal and the Punjab.

Separated by sea from her Dominions and Colonies, the Government at home has never been able to impose its will on our overseas possessions, and the only attempt to do so, in 1775, gave rise to the American Rebellion and the loss of our American Colonies. The impossibility of exerting control based on physical force has resulted in our having to maintain alliance by means of sentiment. Herein the cohesive force which holds the Empire together is very different to that found in all preceding empires, which have been held together either by tyranny, by federalization or by confederalization. The British Empire, as we see it to-day, is actually a family partnership held together as every family is by a bond of family-preservation and sentiment; preservation not only of the family as a whole, but of the family as the inheritor of traditions, customs and a literature which it is considered honourable to maintain because they have proved their worth.

In the histories of our Dominions we find, as in our own case, that the first principle of government has been the establishment of domestic peace by the threat rather than the application of armed force; and that, once

this domestic peace has been secured and can be maintained by the armed forces of the Dominions, we have withdrawn our imperial garrisons and declared the Dominions to be of age, that is to be in a position to govern themselves in every respect. The coming of age of a Colony has in every case (except that of Ireland) been decided by the fact that the Colony concerned could maintain law and order within its frontiers.

The supreme test of the British system of Empire has been in the past, as I shall show, not the disruptive but the consolidating effect of foreign wars. Every great foreign war has given a new lease of life to the intricate partnership which, for over two and a half centuries, has succeeded in reconciling "diversity with uniformity." The supreme claim of the British system of rule is, that it has been able for many years to hold together as one family a quarter of the inhabitants of the globe; and the secret of its success is that it has tended its Colonies in infancy and freed them on their coming of age. It has in fact reconciled security and liberty in a manner totally unapproached by any former empire.

From the above we see that, in spite of many haphazard actions, in spite of many mistakes and much foolishness, the British Empire, Commonwealth, or Brotherhood, has

in the main been built up on certain well-defined principles, namely:—

- (i) The establishment of domestic peace.
- (ii) The maintenance of the balance of power.
- (iii) The establishment of secure frontiers.
- (iv) The maintenance of command of the sea.
- (v) The self-government of self-control-able Colonies.

These five great principles have proved their worth, beyond any shadow of doubt, not only to the English race but to all races in the world. In the past, their infringement has led to disaster and war; in the future, their maintenance will lead to prosperity and peace. Our Imperial destiny is in our own hands as for centuries it was in the hands of our forefathers.

II.

The Childhood of Imperial Defence, 1588-1815

THOUGH the prestige of British sea power is much older than the Tudor period, the coming of age of the English navy dates from the defeat of the Spanish Armada, in 1588, when the attempt of Philip II to gain mastery over Europe, by upsetting the balance of power, was frustrated. The war with Spain was not, however, an empire war, for, except for a few distant settlements the Empire did not exist. The next attempt to upset this balance was made by the Emperor Ferdinand II on the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, his object being to establish a powerful Germanic Empire. The war opened with a campaign in Bohemia in 1618, and its first phase terminated by the defeat of Frederic Elector Palatine, the Protestant champion, at Prague, in 1620. The English people demanded war against the Catholic League and the Emperor, but King James I did nothing but talk and talk. "By a threat of war," writes Lieut. Colonel Vestal, "he actually brought about a suspension of arms through the summer of 1621, and when the Imperialists discovered that he had nothing but words in

his armoury they resumed the war. His obstinate refusal to go to war at the demand of his people furnishes an apt illustration of the general truth that the people are more ready than their rulers to go to war in palpable cases where the balance of power is threatened."* At length the Protestant Cause found its champion in Gustavus Adolphus who, though he died fourteen years before the war ended, broke its back. Austria was ultimately defeated and the peace of Westphalia was signed in 1648.

The back-wash of the Thirty Years' War and the prowess of Gustavus had its influence on England, stimulating as it did the spirit of liberty in that country. In part, at least, it resulted in the overthrow of Charles I and the establishment of Oliver Cromwell, the first of the great British Imperialists, as Protector. Between the years 1653 and 1658, English foreign policy took form in a manner it had never done before.

The attempt to overthrow the balance of power on the part of Austria having been frustrated, next we find Louis XIV attempting to establish a hegemony over Western Europe, and the balance of power is once again thrown into the melting pot. The English people were bitterly disposed towards Louis, and, as

* "The Maintenance of Peace," S. C. Vestal, p. 293.

opposition was damped down by denial of a foreign war with the would-be master of Europe, their sentiments found expression in the Revolution of 1688, which resulted in the overthrow of James II, and the invitation to William Prince of Orange to take his place. This action led to England declaring war on France, in which, in 1689, she was joined by Spain, leaving Louis without a single ally except for Turkey and Ireland.

Hostilities terminated temporarily in the Peace of Ryswick, in 1697, but broke out again four years later. In March, 1702, Queen Anne, who had only just ascended the throne, despatched Marlborough to the Hague where it was arranged that Holland should raise 100,000 men, Spain 100,000, the Emperor 80,000 and England 40,000, without counting her fleet. In 1703, Savoy and Portugal joined the allies. "With the defeat at Ramillies and the conclusion of the union of England and Scotland in 1707, the greatness of Marlborough reached its height. In five years he had rescued Holland, saved Germany, and thrown France back on a purely defensive position. He exercised an undisputed supremacy over an alliance which embraced the greatest European powers. At home he was practically first minister, commander-in-chief, and absolute master, through

his wife, of the Queen herself."* The war of the Spanish Succession was terminated, in 1713, by the Peace of Utrecht, which closed what has been called by Sir Charles Lucas "the first of our Empire wars."†

By the Peace of Utrecht Great Britain obtained in perpetuity the outskirts of the future Dominion of Canada, Nova Scotia, Hudson Bay, and exclusive possession of Newfoundland.

The recuperative powers of France have throughout her history been astonishing, and, though crushed in 1713, twenty years later her old vigour for war had returned. In 1733, France and Spain made a secret compact to destroy the maritime power of England. This resulted in a naval war between England and Spain in 1739. Meanwhile the European horizon was darkening, for the Emperor Charles VI was nearing his end, and, in order to support the Pragmatic Sanction, the following Powers bound themselves by solemn treaties: England, Russia, Prussia, France, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, and the Germanic States. Nevertheless, almost immediately after the death of the Emperor, a scramble for his possessions took place, Frederick the Great forthwith violated his word of honour, and in

* "The Maintenance of Peace," S. C. Vestal, p. 324.

† "The Empire at War," Sir Charles Lucas, Vol. I, p. 3.

place of defending the rights of Maria Theresa he marched an army into Silesia, and won the victories of Molwitz and Prague. Having obtained what he desired, and fearing the growing power of his allies, he forthwith abandoned them and made peace with the Hungarian Queen. This resulted in a defensive union between England, Prussia and Austria. In place of establishing peace, this alliance re-awakened the ambitions of Maria Theresa who sent an army to Naples in 1744. Thereupon Frederick, allying himself with France, declared war on Austria. This war was terminated in 1748 by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, England giving up her conquests to spare her allies from dismemberment.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the population of the English Colonies in America had increased to 1,200,000 whites and to some 250,000 negroes. Government was representative and freedom of religious views observed. The French, in Canada, fearing the ever increasing power of these Colonies determined that, with the exception of the English seaboard, the bulk of the continent should be theirs. With this great expansion as their goal, a chain of forts was built to cut the English Colonists from the West. This infringement of one of the principles of British

Empire, namely, the establishment of a secure frontier, led to the opening of the Seven Years' War in 1756.

To be successful, it was essential that France should gain command of the sea which, had she succeeded in doing, would have overthrown the balance of power in Europe, since at this time she was the most powerful military nation in the world. The result of these hostilities was the formation of two alliances; on one side the alliance of England, Brunswick, Hesse-Cassel and Prussia, and on the other of France, Austria, Russia, Saxony and Sweden.

For England the war opened, as every English war since has, with a series of disasters: Braddock was defeated on the Monongahela River in 1755; Port Mahon surrendered, and Abercromby was repulsed at Ticonderoga. In 1757, the tide of defeat, however, turned with the victory of Clive at Plassey, and, with the establishment of William Pitt as head of the government at home, the war at last was prosecuted with vigour and determination. Pitt at once supported Frederick and organized victory. In 1758, Louisburg and Cape Breton Island were captured; in 1759, Wolfe defeated Montcalm and occupied Quebec; Goree, Guadeloupe, Fort Duquesne, Ticonderoga and Niagara were taken; Boscawen

defeated the French off Cape Lagos, and Hawke destroyed the Brest fleet at Quiberon. The year 1759 was probably the most successful in British history, for besides the astonishing successes in America even more remarkable ones were gained in India. In the course of three years the French were defeated in every part of this vast country, and their eastern fleet was either captured or destroyed.

A result of this overwhelming disaster was one which was repeated again under Napoleon and William II of Germany. No longer being able to meet the British fleet, the French resorted to a *guerre de course*, and, in 1760, they captured no less than one-tenth of England's merchantmen.

On the continent of Europe Frederick the Great's fortune rose and fell. He gained at Prague, and lost at Kolin. He beat the French at Rossbach, the Austrians at Leuthen, and the Russians at Zorndorf. He suffered a bad defeat at Hochkirchen and was almost annihilated at Kunersdorf. In 1762, Lord Bute's government, which succeeded Pitt's, shamefully abandoned him. This resulted in England not being able to find a single ally in Europe when, in 1775, her American Colonies revolted. The Seven Years' War was concluded, in 1763, by the peace of Hubertusburg which left England " Mistress of Northern America,

the future mistress of India, claiming as her own the empire of the seas."*

The powerful position to which England had raised herself filled the nations of Europe with envy, for in her increased strength they thought that they could see a breakdown of the balance of power, and, consequently, a weakening of their frontiers. This was, however, a misconception of the principle underlying this balance, namely, that to gain world dominion it is necessary for a nation *simultaneously to be all powerful on land and at sea*. To be supreme on only one of these elements was not an infringement, but this was not yet generally realized though it might have been, seeing that immediately after peace had been declared the British Army was drastically reduced in size.

The defeat of the French in Canada, removing as it did a hostile nation from the frontiers of the American Colonies, was one of the main causes of the American Rebellion, as a withdrawal of the danger of foreign aggression nearly always gives rise to domestic discord. The import duty on tea was only a pretext of war, as was the Ems telegram in 1870, and the murder of the Arch Duke Ferdinand at Serajevo in 1914.

* "History of the English People," J. R. Green, Bk. IX, Ch. 1.

1775, the American Colonies revolted, and, in 1778, France concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with the Americans, and went to war with England, Spain following suit in 1779, and Russia, Sweden, Holland and Denmark, in 1780, combined in armed neutrality against Great Britain. It was now England's turn to confront the world.

The English fleet consisted of 150 ships of the line, and was faced by a French fleet of 80 ships and a Spanish fleet of 60. "It had been a maxim with the best English naval authorities of the preceding era, with Hawke and his contemporaries," writes Admiral Mahan, "that the British navy should be kept equal in numbers to the combined fleets of the Bourbon kingdoms—a condition which, with the better quality of the *personnel* and the larger maritime population upon which it could draw, would have given a real superiority of force."* In spite of this naval preponderance, in place of striking a concentrated blow at the Bourbon fleets, Great Britain scattered her ships; and in spite of Rodney's victory off Cape St. Vincent in 1780, she lost the war and her Colonies. In 1783, peace was signed at Versailles and the independence of the United States of America

* "Influence of Sea Power upon History," A. T. Mahan, p. 523.

was acknowledged. "Henceforth," writes Lieut.-Colonel Vestal, "the United States was arrayed for one hundred and forty-four years, that is, until 1917, against the interests which supported the balance of power in Europe and made for the peace and independence of nations."* Had the American Colonies remained part of the British Empire, there can be little doubt that Napoleon's defeat would have been more rapid, and further still that the Great War of 1914-1918 would never have taken place. The loss of these Colonies may be attributed to many causes, one of which was the abandonment of Frederick the Great by Lord Bute's government during the Seven Years' War. To the nations of Europe this action proclaimed the English to be self-seeking and perfidious, a character which Bute's government, but not the nation deserved.

The triumph of liberty in America had its repercussion on the bureaucratic governments of Europe, and more particularly on France, the people of which country had become septic to revolt through imbibing the doctrines of Voltaire, Rousseau and other philosophers. On July 14, 1789, the French Revolution was born at the storming of the Bastille; the Members of the National Assembly seized the

* "The Maintenance of Peace," S. C. Vestal, p. 343.

reins of government, and, proclaiming themselves "the legislators of the world," attacked the domestic peace of every nation in Europe. In other words, the central principle of this revolution, as of the Russian Revolution of 1917, was to destroy the balance of power between nations by destroying nationality; for as Edmund Burke said: "To them, the wish, the want, the liberty, the toil, the blood of individuals is as nothing. Individuality is left out of their scheme of government. The State is all in all."

The first result of the French Revolution was an upset of the balance of power, which Austria and Russia proposed to take advantage of by partitioning Turkey. Pitt, who welcomed the revolution (just as our statesmen in 1917 welcomed the Russian Revolution) in order to maintain the integrity of Turkey sought an alliance with France, Prussia and Holland, but the September massacres awakened, if not Pitt himself, the English people to the true nature of French Brotherhood.

To reinstate domestic tranquillity in France, the French instinctively carried war over their frontiers. Pitt, to allay suspicion, reduced the army and promised neutrality even if Belgium were occupied. Whilst these attempts to limit the radius of war were being made, the

Girondists "established brotherly relations with the native princes of India and with the United Irishmen." Peaceful persuasions were, however, not destined to endure, for on November 19, 1792, the National Convention declared war on all nations: "All governments are our enemies; all people are our allies" was its watchword. Pitt, nevertheless, still sought to avoid war, but his moderation was only mistaken for fear. Fox went a step further, and the following words of his appear to-day truly comic:

"I was formerly the strenuous advocate for the balance of power, when France was that intriguing, restless nation which she had formerly proved. Now that the situation of France is altered, and that she has erected a government from which neither insult nor injury can be apprehended by her neighbours, I am extremely indifferent concerning the balance of power, and shall continue so till I see other nations combine the same power with the same principles of government as that of Old France."*

Whilst such nonsense was being talked, in February, 1793, France declared war on England and Holland. England was, however, in no position to wage war except at sea, for since 1783 her army through neglect had

* "History of Europe," A. Alison, Vol. I, p. 161.

become a dissipated and degraded rabble. In order to wage war, Pitt formed the First Coalition, which consisted of England, Prussia, Austria, Spain, Holland and Sardinia. The pretext was the restoration of Louis XVIII, the cause the re-establishment of the balance of power in Europe so that domestic peace might be guaranteed. On March 25, 1793, Great Britain and Russia signed a treaty closing their ports against France, and urged neutrals to do likewise.

Successful at sea, Great Britain with the army she possessed was unsuccessful on land, except against the Irish rebels who were defeated at Vinegar Hill in 1798. To create a military force, the Duke of York was made Commander-in-Chief in 1798, and, by the time Bonaparte landed in Egypt, under the able administration of the Duke, the beginnings of a new Army had been created.

By now Bonaparte realized that British sea power stood between him and World dominion, and so, in 1800, as First Consul, he sought peace with England and Austria in order to gain time to increase his fleet. "Let us concentrate all our activity upon the navy, and destroy England," said he, "that done, Europe is at our feet." In March, 1802, peace was concluded at Amiens.

Once peace had been established, Bonaparte

threw all his immense energies into preparations for his war with England. In May, 1803, a dispute, however, arose over the non-withdrawal of the British troops from Malta, and as French preparations were becoming more and more threatening, England declared war, a war which was to last for twelve years.

On May 18, 1804, Napoleon became emperor, and before the year was out, in order to obtain control of the Spanish fleet, he forced Spain to declare war on Great Britain. A new European Coalition was then formed by England, Russia and Austria (Prussia remaining aloof), the object of which was to re-establish the balance of power which Napoleon had overthrown. Napoleon's answer to this Coalition was to prepare for the invasion of England. In 1805, he obtained control of the Spanish fleet, but all to no purpose, for off Cape Trafalgar, on October 28, 1805, the combined Franco-Spanish fleet under Villeneuve, numbering 33 ships of the line to Nelson's 27, was decisively defeated.

Even before Trafalgar had been fought and lost by Villeneuve, Napoleon had become aware of his failure to wrest the trident from the hands of Great Britain. Another plan at once took form—Ulm capitulated on October 22, the Austrians and Russians were defeated at Austerlitz on December 2, and the German

Emperor was forced to accept peace at Presburg on December 26.

Prussia, who had failed to support Austria in 1805, met her fate at Jena and Auerstadt on October 14, 1806. The battle of Eylau followed on February 8, 1807; Friedland on June 14; and the Czar was forced to sign peace at Tilsit in July.

Having thus settled with his continental antagonists, Napoleon at once turned his attention to England, and, not being able to invade her, set about to enforce his "Continental System" which he had promulgated from Berlin shortly after the battle of Jena. This system was to place England in a state of blockade, and to prohibit all commerce with her. Further to embarrass England, he forced Russia to declare war against her in October, 1807.

Great Britain's reply to the "Continental System" was to place all the French ports in a state of blockade, which rendered every French vessel bound for a French port liable to confiscation. Later on all ships belonging to the allies of France were similarly treated. The result of this action was that, whilst England was nearly ruined, the commerce of France was entirely ruined.

Never for a moment losing sight of the vital importance of overthrowing British naval

supremacy, Napoleon sought to gain possession of the Spanish dockyards, by placing his brother Joseph on the throne of Spain. This action forced England to enter into alliance with the insurgents, thus was "the Spanish ulcer" created. Sir John Moore having been forced to retire to Corunna, Napoleon turned against the Austrians who had revolted from his despotism, and defeated them at Echmuhl and Wagram.

Whilst Sir Arthur Wellesley was defeating the French marshals in Spain, Napoleon was preparing to wage war on Russia on account of that country having failed to enforce the Continental System against England. In 1812, the best French troops were withdrawn from Spain to reinforce the Grand Army, which perished almost to a man in the Russian snows before the winter was out. The result of this disaster was the general rising which took place in Prussia in the spring of 1813. Defeated at Lutzen and Bautzen, the news of the great victory over King Joseph at Vittoria, on June 21, re-kindled the spirit of liberty. Austria joined the allies, and, on October 19, Napoleon was severely defeated at Leipzig. The campaign of 1814 followed, and, on April 11, Napoleon abdicated and Louis XVIII was restored to the French throne. In February the following year Napoleon escaped from

Elba, and, on June 18, 1815, he was decisively beaten at Waterloo.

On his second abdication, the allies met at Vienna to readjust the balance of power in Europe. Germany clamoured for dismemberment of France, just as France desired dismemberment of Germany in 1919, because in both cases, the country concerned wished to secure its frontiers by destroying the military power of the nation bordering on them. England's frontiers were, however, secure, yet her overseas possessions were but an encumbrance to her unless her trade could flourish. For commerce, international peace was required as well as domestic tranquillity, consequently, in both 1815 and 1919 she opposed the dismemberment of the vanquished, for a strong France and a strong Germany are necessary components in the balance of power which carries with it international peace and prosperity. For France reparations were small, in all some £57,000,000. England's share of the indemnity was £5,000,000 which she handed over to the King of the Netherlands in spite of the fact that the wars had cost her approximately one thousand millions.

III.

The Decadence of Imperial Defence, 1816-1874

THE Great War victoriously ended, European politics lost all vision, and a period of dementia supervened. So terrible had been the sufferings of twenty-two years of warfare, so needless did this period of strife appear to be, that the statesmen of Europe congregated together to seek a rational solution to an irrational problem. The symptoms of war were apparent, its causes little understood, consequently, we find the cure proposed was none other than that of a league of nations called the Holy Alliance, from the faults and failures of which every European war since the Congress adjourned may be traced.* This Alliance was signed by all the European sovereigns except the Prince Regent of England, the Pope and the Sultan; its first article reads as follows:—

“Conformably to the words of the Holy Scriptures which command all men to consider each other as brethren, the three contracting monarchs (Russia, Austria and Prussia, the three original signatories) will remain united by the bonds of a true and

* “The Maintenance of Peace,” S. C. Vental, p. 316.

indissoluble fraternity, and, considering each other as fellow countrymen, they will on all occasions and in all places lend each other aid and assistance; and regarding themselves towards their subjects and armies as fathers of families, they will lead them, in the same spirit of fraternity with which they are animated, to protect Religion, Peace and Justice."

Very similar words were breathed in 1919.

In principle both the Holy Alliance and the League of Nations are communistic, consequently, impractical and dangerous.

Alexander the Emperor of Russia, the now dominant power in Europe (just as the United States was the dominant world power in 1919) was the chief instigator of this well meaning but dangerous experiment. His idea was a Confederation of Europe based on military force, the Czar being willing "to march 200,000 Russians in any direction for any European (not necessarily Russian) purpose." For over twenty years Great Britain had been waging war against tyranny, and now had tyranny re-arisen in as dangerous a form as ever dreamt of by Napoleon. Goethe strongly supported the Holy Alliance, he said of it that "nothing greater or more beneficial for mankind was ever devised," and yet its intention was to interfere wherever peace was

threatened, and to crush internal revolution without contemplating the external effect. The Holy Alliance was in fact a conspiracy against popular liberty, consequently a standing irritant of war.

The principles of the Alliance were discussed at congresses and conferences; discussion was unlimited, war was to be talked to death. In 1818, at Aix-la-Chapelle; at Troppau, in 1820; at Laibach, in 1821, and at Verona in 1822, common-sense was drowned in words, and the suppression of the principle of nationality inevitably resulted in anarchy and domestic strife.

In 1833, the Holy Alliance was renewed by Russia, Austria and Prussia. In 1849, Russia suppressed the Hungarian revolution, and has never since been forgiven by the Hungarian people for this act of interference. By now, Europe had resuscitated from the effects of the Napoleonic wars; her nations were gaining vigour, and with the rise of national heathfulness the Holy Alliance died a natural death in the early fifties.

From 1815 to 1854, in spite of protestations of peacefulness, Russia had been the disturbing factor in Europe. In 1854, in order to preserve the integrity of Turkey against Russian aggression, France, Great Britain and Sardinia joined Turkey and went to war with Russia.

Though not a war of the first magnitude, the Crimean War is of particular interest to ourselves, for from it dates the first general effort on the part of the Colonies to assist the home country. In 1775, the Canadian Militia had fought side by side with English troops against the American rebels, this was certainly a remarkable event since Canada had only come under British rule in 1763.* In 1801, Indian troops had crossed the sea to Egypt to fight against Bonaparte. But, in 1854, we find the Canadian Parliament voting £20,000 for the widows and orphans of the soldiers and sailors of Great Britain who had perished in the Crimea; and what is still more interesting we find Australia taking measures for her own defence, a volunteer force being raised at Sydney. No Colonial troops, however, were actually despatched to the Crimea, troops from home being alone employed.

From the military point of view the Crimean war was an inglorious one. The valour of the British soldier had not diminished, but the organization and higher leading of the army were so deplorable that it is worth enquiring into a few of the reasons for this condition of unreadiness.

* So also did the South Africans fight side by side with English troops during the Great War, twelve years after the Peace of Vereeniging.

Immediately after Napoleon had been exiled, the army in size had been drastically reduced. This was both necessary and inevitable, but once reduced, no attempt was made to weave the remaining fragments into an economic organization or to educate commanders, or to train a General Staff. The army though outwardly disciplined was organically a mob; and a brainless one at that. Prior to 1854, the administrative services of the army were dealt with by three separate departments: the Secretary-at-War's Office, the Treasury and the Ordnance Department, all housed in separate buildings. Prior to the act of Union these departments found their counterparts in Scotland and Ireland, the troops being raised and commanded independently of the forces in England. "For want of a strong military department," writes General Ellison, "there was no chance of any semblance of balance being preserved between military interests on the one side and administrative interests on the other the only marvel is that, in such circumstances, the army system could have worked at all."* The money saved in failing to place the remaining fractions of the army on an economic footing,

* "Our Army System, in Theory and Practice," Brig.-General G. F. Ellison, C.B. "The Army Review," Vol. III, No. 2, October, 1912.

which might have cost a few hundred thousand pounds yearly, was spent tens of times over in 1854 and 1855, and the sufferings which British soldiers had to endure, because of this parsimony, beggars description. It was not even equalled by the horrors of Flanders during the winter of 1914-1915. Scarcely had Sebastopol fallen than the archaic military organisation maintained by the East India Company in India crumbled and then crashed into mutiny. Once again political lethargy and spurious military economy brought forth their full crop of horrors, and once again the despised and neglected British soldier pulled the chestnuts of the politicians out of the war-grate. This done he was cast into the street a derelict and a vagabond, as had happened before in 1713, 1763, 1783 and 1815.

These two wars had, however, curative results. It was realised at home how defenceless the Empire was on land. "A little over sixty years ago," writes Sir Charles Lucas, "the overseas provinces of the Empire, with the exception of India, so far from being prepared to fight the battles of the Empire beyond their own shores, were not prepared in any effective sense to defend those shores. Defence was still looked upon as the charge of the Mother Country."*

A further stimulus was

* "The Empire at War," Sir Charles Lucas, Vol. I, p. 69.

given to enquiry and reform by the disturbing influence of France, the Emperor Napoleon III, having cultivated a taste for war in 1855, and wishing to maintain domestic peace at home, in 1859 declared war on Austria, and by the grace of God and the pluck of the French soldier, won the battle of Solferino. The ascendancy of France gave birth to the volunteer movement in England, the object of which was to supplement the Regular Army by a second line in the event of a French invasion. This movement brought the question of self-defence in a tangible form before the eyes of the Colonies.

In 1859, as an outcome of the general military fervour which had been re-awakened in Great Britain, a Departmental Committee, consisting of one member from the Treasury, Colonial Office and War Office respectively, was appointed to enquire into the cost of the military defences of the Colonies, which amounted to a little under £4,000,000. At about this time the garrisons of the Colonies, excluding India, totalled from 42,000 to 43,000 men. The report of this Committee was placed before the House of Commons in 1861, and a motion was accepted for the formation of a Select Committee on Colonial Military Expenditure. Mr. Gladstone giving evidence before this Committee said: "I

would almost venture to say, without speaking of cases in which the circumstances are altogether peculiar, that no community which is not primarily charged with the ordinary business of its own defence is really, or can be, in the full sense of the word, a free community." And again: "I have not the smallest doubt that in the proportion that responsibilities are accepted by communities, they will be more disposed to go beyond the bare idea of self-defence, and to render loyal and effective assistance in the struggles of the Empire."*

In the above words is expressed not only the fundamental principle of self-government, namely, that in itself no nation has power to determine its destinies until it possesses power (military power) to enforce its will and so maintain domestic peace; but also the principle of Imperial partnership, namely, that as Napoleon said of an army, it disperses to live and concentrates to fight, so of an Empire, in peace time it should live diversely and in war time fight unitedly. The equating of the differences of these two periods comprises the central problem of Imperial defence.

In the report of this Committee it was pointed out "that the tendency of modern

* "The Empire at War," Sir Charles Lucas, Vol. I, pp. 70 and 78.

warfare was to strike a blow at the heart of a hostile power"; consequently, the concentration of military and naval force around the heart was becoming more and more important. Under the then existing system of defence, this concentration in Great Britain was impossible except for the fleet, because the British Army was split up in small packets all over the globe. In order to effect such a concentration one thing was necessary, namely, that the Colonies should undertake their own local and domestic defence, and so permit of the regular garrisons being withdrawn.

Before I show how this was effected, it is necessary to consider the foreign policy which at this time was adopted by the British Government, for it eventually, in the year 1914, led to an unhinging of the balance of power in Europe, and, consequently, was one of the direct causes of the Great War.

At this time England was bound by treaty to assist Denmark should she be attacked. In 1864, Bismarck, clearly seeing that German unity and Prussian dominion could only be accomplished by the cohesive influence of successful foreign wars, and fearing the strength of France and the vastness of Russia, decided that the true direction of attack lay towards Vienna. As a preliminary move in this ambitious plan, in alliance with

Austria, he attacked Denmark. Bound as we were to Denmark by treaty, the Danes expecting our support met the challenge. It proved their ruin. Not only was England unready to fulfil her treaty rights, but Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright strongly opposed any idea of war against Prussia. Of this Lieut.-Colonel Vestal writes: "The eloquence of Mr. Gladstone and the influence of Mr. Bright and of the Queen were responsible for this abject surrender to Prussian aggression . . . With the abandonment of Denmark began a decadence of England's position and prestige in Europe which made her, in the words of Prince Bismarck *une quantité négligeable*."*

In this year, 1864, the future tigress of Europe tasted her first human blood; the dragon's teeth were sown, and the crop of warriors which arose out of our dishonouring our treaty with a small, gallant and kindred nation, exactly half a century later, was reaped in a World War. No greater lesson of perfidy paid back in its own coin can be found in history, for by breaking our treaty with Denmark, Germany, in 1914, broke her treaty with Belgium.

Once Prussia had tasted blood, it was not long before she sought "blood and iron" as her daily food. In 1866, she attacked Austria.

* "The Maintenance of Peace," S. C. Vestal, p. 491.

England stood by "to wait and see," though Sir Robert Morier, no mean judge, was of opinion that a little energetic language from London would have prevented hostilities.* So fearful of war had the English nation become that, in 1867, at the instance of Mr. John Bright, the purpose of the British Army, as laid down in the Annual Mutiny Act, was changed. This Act stated that the object of the Army was to maintain "the safety of the United Kingdom, the defence of the possessions of her Majesty's crown, and the preservation of the balance of power in Europe."† Bright objected to the last ten words, and they were cut out!

As Lieut.-Colonel Vestal truly says: "the menace of a neighbouring nation always causes pacifism to flourish in a menaced state," and as Prussian aggression was reducing England to pacify so also was it reducing France—the next victim. In 1868, Marshal Niel defending a military measure was asked by Jules Favre: "Do you wish to make France a barracks?" To which Niel replied: "Do you wish to make it a cemetery?"‡ Pacifism triumphed, and two years later the French

* "Memoirs," Sir Robert Morier, Vol. II, p. 61.

† "The Balance of Power in Europe," Sir John Maurice, p. 1.

‡ "Problems of Power," W. M. Fullerton, p. 175.

churchyards and fields were filled to overflowing.

In Sir Robert Morier's opinion war could have been averted had the British Government boldly acclaimed that it would support France. Mr. Gladstone, however, thought otherwise as long as the integrity of Belgium remained inviolate. This so enraged Mr. Bright, who was at this time ill in bed, that he wrote to Mr. Gladstone protesting against the idea of England defending Belgium against either France or Germany, and insisted that Great Britain should remain out of the war. Writing on December 15, 1870, Sir Robert Morier said: "I believe that the lust of *gloire*, kindled as it is within her (Germany), will burn with much more terrible fierceness than ever it did in the *grande nation*, even as coal burns more terribly when once it is kindled, than straw."* His words were prophetic, for, from 1870 onwards, the one idea in the Prussian mind was to dominate Europe and then the World.

The New Zealand war of 1868, a very minor episode when compared to the great European struggle which preceded it in 1866, and the greater one which followed it in 1870, constitutes a distinct turning point in our history of Imperial defence. The Imperial troops in Australia were sent to the seat of

* "Memoirs," Sir Robert Morier, Vol. II, p. 346.

war and their place was taken by Australian volunteers. This gave an impetus towards Colonial self-defence, and, in August, 1870, the last of the Imperial garrison was withdrawn from Australia. A year later, partially as a result of the Red River expedition, Imperial troops were also withdrawn from Quebec, garrisons only remaining at Halifax and Esquimalt; these garrisons were withdrawn in 1906.

IV.

The Renaissance of Imperial Defence, 1875-1902

BY the close of the year 1874, the causes of an eventual European conflagration had been firmly established by the creation of a great military empire in Central Europe. This had been rendered possible through the effectiveness of British foreign policy since the year 1864. The effect of this unhinging of the balance of power on land was a re-awakening of the national spirit of self-preservation throughout the peoples of the world: Japan is reborn, France is agitated, and Great Britain simultaneously expands her land frontiers, and begins, even though in a dilatory manner, to think about putting her Imperial house in order.

The Imperial expansion on the part of Great Britain which characterizes this period in its turn stimulated colonial enterprise amongst European nations. This led to extensive land grabbing operations in Africa, in which Germany, controlled by Bismarck's centralizing policy, played a late part. This part was, however, inevitable, for the Bismarckian ideal tended from Europe to World dominion, and

for World dominion colonies, especially ready made ones, were an essential. The Colonial Empire created by William II, during the last decade of the nineteenth century, provided hostages of peace so long as British supremacy on the seas continued. This did not fit in with the arrogant character of the young Emperor who, shortly after his accession to the throne, determined on completely upsetting the balance of world power by adding to his mastery on land the mastery of the seas. This ideal coupled with the enormous expansion of science, wealth and population, which characterizes this period, converted the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century into a mighty power plant for war; not only a German war but wars generally, which reached a culminating point in 1914, exactly one hundred years after the last immense conflagration had been extinguished.

Scarcely had the Franco-Prussian war terminated when, in 1873, Bismarck, considering that Germany had not made the most of her recent victories, set out to pick another quarrel with France. In 1875, once again the European situation had grown acute, when Gortchakoff, the Russian Prime Minister, intervened. He was supported by Lord Russell. This face of front may be looked upon as one of the great turning points in the

history of British Imperial defence, for from that day the tide of political decadence slowly turned, and, with its turn, a new spirit of nationality was developed throughout the Empire, the first symptom of which is recorded by M. Poincaré as follows:—

“On the morrow of this alarming incident the Duke Decazes wrote to Count d'Harcourt, our ambassador in London: ‘You will be able to turn to good the first manifestation of firmness on the part of England. I persist in counting less on her than on Russia, but I have never ceased to hope for a *rapprochement* between these two Powers that will enable us to go with them without having to choose between them, and it appears to me that events are developing in a manner that will prove that I am right.’”*

This same year the Christian population of Bosnia and Herzegovina revolted against the Turks. Serbia and Montenegro sided with the insurgents, and, in 1878, Russia took the field against Turkey and imposed upon her the Treaty of San Stefano. Bismarck objected to this settlement and demanded a conference of European Powers. The result was the Congress of Berlin, under the presidency of Bismarck who arranged for the administration

* “The Origin of the War,” Raymond Poincaré, p. 40.

of Bosnia and Herzegovina to be handed over to Austria, the German satellite, and thus created an explosive area in south-eastern Europe. This was Bismarck's answer to what he considered Russian interference to his projected war on France.

The recovery of France having been more rapid than Germany had expected, in 1879, Bismarck strengthened his position by entering into a defensive alliance with Austria. Three years later Italy joined these two, and the Triple Alliance was formed. Meanwhile, in 1879, Lord Beaconsfield appointed a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Carnarvon, who, as Secretary of the Colonies, in 1878, had very wisely said: "We lavish on what is obsolete, save on what is essential, and always think that our past good luck is a guarantee of future success," words which are as true to-day as when first uttered. The terms of reference of this Commission were to enquire into the defence of British possessions and commerce abroad.

The report of this Conference dwelt upon "the paramount importance to the British Empire of securing coaling stations," and pointed out that the Australian Colonies were "taking effectual measures for the defence of their principal ports." This, as Sir Charles Lucas writes: "was the beginning of tabulating in

an intelligible plan Imperial fortresses and fortified coaling stations on the ocean highways, of a scheme for systematic Imperial defence, keeping in view the requirements of the Royal Navy as the great bulwark of the Empire, the security of sea-going commerce as the life-blood of its widely sundered peoples."*

In 1885, on account of the alarm of war resulting from an incident on the Afghan frontier, a standing Colonial Defence Committee† was established, and this same year, which was also a critical one for the Empire on account of the war in Egypt, saw some 400 Canadian *Voyageurs* working on the Nile under Lord Wolseley who had learnt to appreciate their worth during the Red River expedition. At the time, the British operations in Egypt gave rise to rather mixed feelings between ourselves and France, an opportunity which Germany did not miss in order to create further trouble with that country.

The jubilee of Queen Victoria, in 1887, was rendered notable by the assembly in England of the First Colonial Conference, at which "Lord Salisbury in his opening address stated that the defence of the Empire was regarded as the most important matter for consideration. The results of the subsequent

* "The Empire at War," Sir Charles Lucas, Vol. I, p. 103.

† Later on known as "The Overseas Defence Committee."

deliberations were, however, significant of no desire on the part of the Colonies to participate to an appreciable extent in sharing the Imperial burden. The discussions revealed the existence of the 'Colonial' idea in all its crudity—the idea that regarded it as England's duty to 'run' the Empire, and to accept the responsibility for its defence as a whole. The Conference is, however, memorable as being the first occasion on which defence was brought prominently before the Colonial Governments as the most important 'common interest' and 'common responsibility' of the Mother Country and daughter states.*

The year 1888, saw the accession of William II to the Prussian throne. Having dismissed Bismarck, he went one step further than that sinister man; in place of European dominion he sought for World dominion which he later on defined as "a place in the sun." Like Mahomet he believed himself to be the agent of God, more particularly "the God of Germany," and, believing this, he stepped forward through the last years of the dying century with the sword in one hand and German *Kultur* in the other. The result of his arrogance and want of tact in

* "Unity of Control in Imperial Defence," Captain E. ff. W. Lascelles. "The Army Review," Vol IV, April, 1913.

disguising his intentions was the formation of a Franco-Russian Convention in 1892-93, which, in 1894, grew into a definite alliance. The main agreement was:—

“If France is attacked by Germany, or by Italy supported by Germany, Russia will employ all her available forces for the purpose of attacking Germany.

“If Russia is attacked by Germany or by Austria supported by Germany, France will employ all her available forces for the purpose of combating Germany.”

The aim of this Dual Alliance was to readjust the balance of power which the formation of the Triple Alliance had upset. Clause 6 of this Convention makes this perfectly clear, for it states that: “The present Convention shall have the same duration as the Triple Alliance.”

In England the awakening interest in Imperial defence was bearing fruit. In 1895, Mr. Chamberlain took charge of the Colonial Office and a new meaning was given to empire. On December 3, 1896, the Duke of Devonshire once again accentuated the fundamental problem of defence by saying: “The maintenance of sea supremacy has been assumed as the basis of Imperial defence. This is the determining factor in fixing the whole defensive policy of the Empire,” and the fol-

lowing year, when the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Colonies assembled in England to attend the Diamond Jubilee, the third meeting of the Colonial Defence Committee was held.* At the conference which followed "Mr. Chamberlain emphasized the fact that defence was regarded by him as the most important 'common interest' of the Empire's peoples, and he invited the Colonial Premiers to express their views as to 'the contribution which they think the Colonies would be willing to make to establish the principle of mutual support.' The material results, however, were not large. The entire naval responsibility was left as before to the Mother Country, and the Colonies agreed to provide their own land defence."†

This Conference was both preceded and followed by troubled times which forecast a stormy entrance of the new and approaching century. In 1896, the Jameson raid had created a crisis in South Africa, which was further accentuated by William II's astonishing telegram to Mr. Kruger. In 1897, we were at war with the hillmen of the North

* The second meeting of this Committee was held at Ottawa in 1894, but Imperial defence did not form a subject of consideration.

† "Unity of Control in Imperial Defence," Captain E. H. W. Lascelles. "The Army Review," Vol. IV, April, 1913.

West Frontier of India, and with the followers of the Mad Mullah in the Soudan. To accentuate our difficulties, William II visited Damascus and proclaimed himself the protector of Turkey and of the Mohammedan world. This same year the Dreyfus case caused an agitation in England against France which was rendered still more acute by the Fashoda incident in the following year. Briefly, it may be said that, by the time the South African war broke out, in 1899, England stood alone in the world completely friendless, and as an Empire totally unprepared to wage a war even against "embattled farmers."

For Great Britain the South African war opened with the normal first act of failures and reverses. The Treasury System, under which the Army had since 1689 been suffocated, and which astonishing to relate still exists, had maintained the Forces at home in a state of archaism. In 1900, Lord Salisbury said: "The exercise of the Treasury's powers in governing other departments of the Government is not for the public benefit." The condition of the Army during this period is well described by Col. Henderson in his "The Science of War,"* in which he points out that

* "The Science of War," Col. G. F. R. Henderson, C.B., Chapter XIV.

at this period: Imperial defence had never been approached from the standpoint of Imperial strategy." Napoleon once said, "The great art of government is not to let men grow old," and Col. Henderson adds: "Manœuvres are the best means of making certain that the superior officers of any army do not grow stupid." Prior to 1899, the efficiency of military training was certainly far below the standard set by Sir John Moore in 1803-1805*; no General Staff existed in spite of the fact that Sadowa and Sedan were victories of the German General Staff.

"In addition it may be observed that centralisation, the invariable refuge of administrative incompetency, exerted an evil influence both on the efficiency of the troops and on the character of the officers. Owing in a great measure to the inelasticity and suspicion of the financial system, and to the existence of a strong civilian element at the War Office, all power, down to the pettiest details, was absorbed by the gigantic establishment in Pall Mall. Not supervision, but direct control, extending to the

* "The Lesson was recalled in 1898; and in many commands, not in India alone, the generals and the regimental officers inaugurated, on their own volition, a new system of training which was practically based upon that of the Light Brigade under Sir John Moore." "The Science of War," Chapter XIV.

smallest item of interior economy, was the watchword of the great departments. To enable them to keep eye and hand on each individual officer and soldier, an interminable series of regulations, complicated by an overgrowing mass of explanations and amendments, and demanding an infinite number of reports, weekly, monthly and annual, made the clerical work of the various Commands as far down as the companies, an astonishing burden. And further, by compelling the officers, on almost all occasions, to refer to instructions either to the letter of the law or to headquarters, by thrusting them into a groove from which there was no escape, this system went far to deprive them of all power of initiative, to make them timid of responsibility and constitutionally averse from exercising their own judgment."*

From the above quotation, from the work of an exceptionally able observer, it will be seen that it was not solely the expanse of the South African plains, or the subtlety of the Boer which caused the campaign to drag out for over two and a half years.

Yet out of evil came good, for the South African War was a war of Imperial evolution.

* "The Science of War," Col. G. F. R. Henderson, C.B., Chapter XIV.

In Egypt, in 1885, besides the Canadian *Voyageurs*, Australian and Indian troops had joined hand with the home forces; in 1900, at Peking, some 250 men of the Australian Naval contingent garrisoned the British Legation; but in South Africa, between the years 1899 and 1902, no less than 92,000 Imperial troops fought alongside their English comrades, namely, 52,000 South Africans, 16,000 Australians, 8,000 Canadians, 6,000 New Zealanders, and 10,000 Indians (non-combatants). Of all the influences this war had on the Empire in part or in whole, this then was the greatest, it demonstrated plainly that the Empire did exist, and that it intended to continue to exist as a united brotherhood in arms should its frontiers be threatened. Indeed, as Col. Henderson exclaims, "England owes much to Paul Kruger."

It may well be realised that such an occurrence as the South African War was at once made use of by Germany for her own purposes; in the words of the Marquis de Noailles: "German policy resembled a veritable circus performance; William II offered sugar to England while Prince von Bulow handled the horsewhip." A rapprochement with France was attempted and attempted again, but refused. In 1900, to his troops in China the Kaiser shouted: "No pardons!

No prisoners! Just as a thousand years ago the Huns, under the lead of Etzel, won a renown which still endures and which filled the world with horror, so Germany will exercise such violence in China that no Chinamen will ever again dare to look a German in the face!" This same year, having styled himself "Admiral of the Atlantic," he also cried: "Germany's greatness makes it impossible for her to do without the ocean." The Reichstag thereupon passed an extensive navy bill for the construction of a high sea fleet of no less than 32 battleships. The bill laid down that "Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that, even for the adversary with the greatest sea power, a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil his position in the world."* In 1902, Germany obtained the concession of the Baghdad Railway.

"Germany," as M. Poincaré says, "was carried off her feet by a kind of drunkenness or vertigo. She felt that she was superior to the rest of humanity, and that it was her destiny to regenerate the world."† Her future aim and object had been well defined by Bronsart von Schellendorf, who said:—

"Do not let us forget the civilizing task

* In Count Reventlov's opinion: "British anger at the Kruger telegram of 1896, converted Germany to the idea of a big fleet."

† "The Origins of the War," R. Poincaré, p. 29.

which the decrees of Providence have assigned to us. Just as Prussia was destined to be the nucleus of Germany, so the regenerated Germany shall be the nucleus of the future Empire of the West. And in order that no one shall be left in doubt, we proclaim from henceforth that our continental nation has a right to the sea, not only to the North Sea, but to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Hence we intend to absorb one after another all the provinces which neighbour on Prussia. We will successively annex Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Northern Switzerland, then Trieste and Venice, finally Northern France from the Sambre to the Loire. This programme we fearlessly pronounce. It is not the work of a madman. The Empire we intend to found will be no Utopia. We have already in our hands the means of founding it, and no coalition in the world can stop us."*

This is drunkenness and vertigo combined.

* Quoted from "The Maintenance of Peace," S. C. Vestal, p. 514.

V.

The Reformation of Imperial Defence, 1903-1914

THE South African War awakened the Imperial spirit amongst the peoples of the Empire. Not that aggressive spirit of ownership so dear to the old Conservative party, or that spirit of fend for yourselves which had typified Liberalism, but a spirit of partnership, and it was from the close of the war, in 1902, that General Bernhardt fixed the date when England began to realize that a war with Germany was a probability. In the middle of the war, in October, 1900, the Parliament of New Zealand passed a new Defence Act which empowered the Government to establish an Imperial reserve available for Imperial service outside of New Zealand. This became a subject of discussion at the Colonial Conference which was assembled in London in 1902, at the date of the coronation of King Edward VII. This Conference is notable from both a naval and a military point of view. As regards the former, the Canadian Premier indicated that the Dominion "contemplated the establishment of a local naval force in the waters of Canada," and as regards the latter, Mr.

Seddon, on behalf of his Government, submitted his Imperial Reserve resolution as follows :—

“That it is desirable to have an Imperial Reserve Force formed in each of His Majesty's Dominions over the seas for service in case of emergency outside the Dominion or Colony in which such reserve is formed. The limits within which such Reserve Force may be employed outside the Colony wherein it is raised to be defined by the Imperial and Colonial Governments at the time such Reserve is formed and to be in accordance with any law in force for the time being respecting the same. The cost of maintaining and equipping such Imperial Reserve Force to be defrayed in such proportion and manner as may be agreed upon between the Imperial and Colonial Governments.”

Mr. Brodrick, then Secretary of State for War, supported this resolution and so also did the Prime Ministers of Cape Colony and Natal, but the representatives of Australia and Canada disagreed, especially the latter, for Sir Wilfred Laurier was always suspicious that any definite agreement on combined Imperial defence would be inimicable to the principle of the local self-government of Canada. Though little was accomplished, New Zealand

by her consistent patriotism had pointed the direction in which the defence of the Empire was to be sought, and her action was not wasted.

Shortly before this Conference was held, a treaty of alliance had been concluded between Great Britain and Japan which, in 1905, was supplemented by another treaty, the object of which was to consolidate and maintain general peace in the regions of Eastern Asia and of India. The former of these two treaties with Japan, signed in 1902, was the first step taken by King Edward VII to rectify the balance of world power which was being upset by the German naval bill of 1900. His next step was to visit Paris on May 1, 1903. There "he won the hearts of the Parisians in a day," and as the "Times" said many years later: "Without King Edward the Entente might never have been made."*

The haphazard manner in which the South African war had been managed, and its length and cost, forced the question of the control of the army and the necessity for a closer understanding between the Home Country and the Dominions to the fore. In 1902, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet was remodelled "to include both the Political and Professional heads of the Navy and Army." About this

* "The Times," December 22nd, 1920.

time Lord Selborne said: "We have been shamefully unbusinesslike in the way we have treated questions of national defence." As a result of all these causes, the Esher Committee was appointed in 1903; the object of which was not only to enquire into the defects of the army system as it existed during the South African War, but to suggest the most effective method whereby a line of demarcation might be drawn between the purely military and purely administrative interests so that duties might accordingly be distributed. On January 11, 1904, the first report of this Committee was issued in which may be found the following conclusions:—

"Our national problems of defence are far more difficult and complex than those of any other Power. They require exhaustive study over a much wider field. The grave danger to which we call attention remains, and demands effective remedy. The British Empire is pre-eminently a great naval, colonial power. There are, nevertheless, no means for co-ordinating defence problems, for dealing with them as a whole, for defining the proper junctions of the various elements, and for ensuring that, on the one hand, peace preparations are carried out upon a consistent plan, and, on the other hand, that in time of emergency a

definite war policy based upon solid data can be formulated. It would be easy to show that unnecessary weakness coupled with inordinate waste of national resources thus results."

Without going into detail the problem this Committee was set to solve was a three-fold one:—

- (i) The co-ordination of the defence forces of the Empire for war.
- (ii) The preparation of the army at home for war.
- (iii) The organization of the army at home for war.

The solution to the first of these problems was sought in the establishment of a Committee of Imperial Defence; the second in the creation of a General Staff at the War Office, and the third in the Haldane army re-organization of 1906-1908.

The Committee of Imperial Defence was no new creation but an evolution of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet formed by Lord Salisbury in 1895, which itself was a lineal descendant of the Secret or Inner Committee of the Council under which many of our national wars were fought: "It was composed not necessarily of Cabinet Ministers, but for war direction always of the principal Cabinet Ministers; the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

the two Foreign Secretaries, the Lord Treasurer and the First Lord of the Admiralty, with the Commander-in-Chief or Master of the Ordnance. They had the power to call anyone to their councils."* As we have seen the Defence Committee of the Cabinet was remodelled in 1902, and all that the War Office Reconstitution Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Esher now did was to extend its scope, laying stress on the necessity for the Prime Minister being, as had not been the case previously, its invariable president. By so doing the War Office would be brought into the closest touch with the policy of the Government. In the main these proposals were accepted by Mr. Balfour, and the Committee of Imperial Defence was formally created in 1904.

In practice the Ministers responsible for the Treasury, the Foreign, Colonial, and Indian Offices as well as the Admiralty and War Office were summoned, together with such heads of departments as was deemed necessary. The main duty of this Committee was to advise the Government on all questions of defence policy affecting more than one Government department. It was and

* "Unity of Control in Imperial Defence," Captain E. ff. W. Lascelles. "The Army Review," Vol. IV, April, 1913. During the war of the Spanish Succession this Secret Committee called to their council a Dutch Admiral.

still is purely a consultative and advisory body possessing no initiatory, administrative or executive powers. It was, in fact, an attempt to create an Imperial General Staff on a temporary basis; as its members changed with each change of Government, consequently it was not in a position to stabilize defence policy except through its permanent Secretariat.

In 1903, the appointment of Commander-in-Chief, which had been placed on a permanent footing in 1798, was abolished, and, as a result of the Royal Commission appointed in 1902 to enquire into the military preparations for the war in South Africa, the Army Council was formed in 1903, consisting of a standing committee of the heads of War Office departments under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State for War. In 1904, when Mr. Balfour created the General Staff, the Chief of the General Staff at the War Office became one of the most important members of this Council.

Whilst these changes were in progress, the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war once again threw the balance of power into the melting pot. The defeat of Russia and the great exertions of Japan strengthened the Triple Alliance, and weakened the position of France and England. It can scarcely be doubted that, had not William II set his mind

on creating an overwhelmingly powerful navy, Germany would have picked a quarrel with the French Republic. As it was, in March, 1905, the Kaiser in his yacht, the Hohenzollern, suddenly appeared off Tangier in order to foster opposition between the Sultan of Morocco and the French.

The immediate effect of the war in Manchuria was that on April 8, 1904, M. Delcassé signed, on behalf of the French Republic, an agreement with the British Government to remove causes of friction and to settle by mutual concessions, the interests of the two nations in Newfoundland, Egypt* and Morocco. This agreement was the starting point of the *Entente Cordiale* and the readjustment of the balance of power in Europe. Whilst France turned to the task of reforming Morocco, Russia collapsed in the Far East, whereupon Germany seized the opportunity to bring pressure to bear on the French. On March 31, 1905, the Kaiser landed at Tangier, which incident, in place of weakening, strengthened the *Entente Cordiale*, and showed quite clearly that German aggressiveness was becoming a real danger to the peace

* The actual determining cause of the Entente, says Lord Sanderson, was Lord Cromer's anxiety for an arrangement with France which would let him place Egyptian finances on a more satisfactory footing. "The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy," Vol. III, p. 309.

of Europe. The immediate result of this incident was an exchange of views between the British and French General Staffs. "I summoned the heads of the British General Staff," says Lord Haldane (then Secretary of State for War), "and saw Colonel Huguet (the French Military Attaché). I became aware at once that there was a new army problem: it was how to mobilise and concentrate opposite the Belgian frontier a force calculated as adequate (with the assistance of Russian pressure in the East) to make up for the inadequacy of the French armies for their great task of defending the entire French frontier from Dunkirk to Belfort, or even further south if Italy should join the Triple Alliance in an attack."

In 1906 these events were followed by the Algeciras Conference, at which Germany discovered that Great Britain and France were not to be separated. Further still, in 1907, the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed; consequently, by the end of this year, a quadruple entente had been established between Great Britain, France, Russia and Japan; Japan being, since 1902, in alliance with Great Britain. Regarding this period, Prince Bulow, when Chancellor of Germany, wrote:—

"British policy tried, little by little, to

bring about a check to Germany by displacing the centre of power in Europe. By a series of agreements in which important British interests were often sacrificed, she sought to attract other European States to herself, in order thereby to isolate Germany. This was the period of what was known as the British policy of encirclement."

This is substantially true, and it openly acknowledges the superiority of British diplomacy, under the leadership of King Edward, over the filibustering policy of Germany as typified in the erratic pranks of Kaiser William.

The military reforms of this period were not only restricted to the army at home. Lord Kitchener, who had recently been appointed Commander-in-Chief in India, issued an Army Order in April, 1904, dealing with "the general question of the preparedness of the Army in India for war." He at once set about revivifying military education and training. "We must follow a system of training for war," he wrote, "suited to the vastly changed conditions of the present day, and steadfastly eliminate all obsolete traditions."* In 1895, the Army in India had been distributed in

* Quoted from: "The Empire at War," Sir Charles Lucas. Vol. I, p. 170.

four commands—the Punjab, Bengal, Bombay and Madras including Burma. In 1904, on Lord Kitchener's suggestion it was concentrated into three: Northern (Punjab), Eastern (Bengal) and Western (Bombay). In May, 1907, a further concentration took place: one army in halves being formed; the Northern half comprising the Peshawar, Rawal Pindi, Lahore, Meerut and Lucknow divisions; and the Southern, the Quetta, Mhow, Poona and Secunderabad divisions, and also the garrisons of Burma and Aden. In all these divisions command was as far as possible decentralised.

The War Office having by now been reorganized and a General Staff created as well as a nebulous combined General Staff—the Committee of Imperial Defence—the Government at home decided that the time was ripe to call together the fifth Colonial Conference, which Conference became known as the "Imperial Conference." This was done in April, 1907.

The first of the Imperial Conferences constituted a notable event in the evolution of Imperial defence. "The Conference was defined as a Conference between Governments, between His Majesty's Government and the Governments of the self-governing Dominions beyond the seas; the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom was constituted

ex officio President of the Conference, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Dominions *ex officio* members"* and a permanent Secretariat was established under the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Before this Conference was laid a well-considered memorandum prepared by the General Staff at the War Office of which the following is a brief summary:—

"The essence of a military system in a great federation of self-governing communities under the same sovereign and belonging to the same race is the power of combination for a common end, and when those communities are separated from each other by the sea, such combination is wholly dependent on the possession of maritime command.

"The second principle which must govern the military organization of the Empire is that each portion should as far as possible provide, organize and render efficient such means of defence as will form a serious deterrent to the most probable and feasible form of attack.

"The Third principle is that of mutual support at a time of emergency. It is a cardinal military maxim that no organiza-

* "The Empire at War," Sir Charles Lucas. Vol. I, p. 184.

tion for defence can be regarded as adequate or complete which does not contemplate offensive action."*

This memorandum then laid stress on the importance of uniformity in organization in order to facilitate training, command and administration, and to economise time and energy. "All troops placed under the command of a general in the field," to quote the General Staff, "should be organized on a single system, and that system should be one with which the commander is closely acquainted and in which the bulk of the army has been trained."

These principles were fully discussed at the Conference, Mr. Haldane, Secretary of State for War, emphasizing the desirability of each self-governing Dominion being fully prepared to carry out its own territorial security. This end he proposed to achieve through the medium of an Imperial General Staff "the creation of which he earnestly recommended." This Staff, in his opinion should be a purely advisory body exercising no control over the troops either in the United Kingdom or of the Dominions. Through it organization could be rendered uniform, and the local Governments or local Commanders-in-Chief could

* "The principles of Imperial Defence," "The Army Review," Vol. I, July, 1911.

receive advice and information "based upon the highest military study of the time."

The Imperial Conference of 1907, unlike the Colonial Conference of 1902, led to little advance in imperial naval co-operation. Politically the most important resolution passed was the establishment of the Dominions on a status "as national entities distinct from the British Isles." It was recognised "that the basis of Imperial organization was the co-operation of five Nations, not the centralization of power in the hands of the British, acting as the Imperial Government." It destroyed once and for all the older conception of Imperial development "as a gradual re-union of the Colonies with the Mother Country through representation in either of the British Houses of Parliament."* The Imperial Conference of 1907 was in fact the coming of age of the children of the family of Great Britain; a Greater Britain was born in a Co-operative Organization based on equality and affection.

The signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention on August 31, 1907, was followed by a visit of the Kaiser to England. In the "Times" our Imperial guest was hailed as "a personality whose many characteristic

* Quoted from "Unity of Control in Imperial Defence," Captain E. ff. W. Lascelles. "The Army Review," vol. IV, April, 1913.

qualities are universally admired, and nowhere more than here." A wave of pacifism now swept over the country. Mr. Asquith assumed the Premiership in 1908, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill becoming members of his Cabinet. These two Ministers at once opened a crusade for the reduction of armaments, and vigorously carried it on for the following three years. At a meeting under the auspices of the Peace Society at the Queen's Hall, on July 28, Mr. Lloyd George stated the German case for armaments as follows:—

"Men have not got the imagination to project themselves into the position of the other party. Look at the position of Germany. Her Army is to her what our Navy is to us—her sole defence against invasion. She has not got a two-Power standard. She is between two Powers, who, in combination, could pour in a vastly greater number of troops than she has . . . I want our friends who think, because Germany is a little frightened, she really means mischief to us, to remember that she is frightened for a reason which would frighten us under the same circumstances. Why should there not be an Anglo-German Entente? We have done it with France, we have done it with Russia, we have done it with the United States."

If this were not illogical enough, on August 15, Mr. Churchill sounded a similiar note :—

“ There is no collision of primary interests between Great Britain and Germany in any quarter of the globe, no real cause of difference. They have nothing to fight about, no prize to fight for, and no place to fight in. We honour that strong, patient, industrious German people, who have been for so many centuries divided, a prey to European intrigue. We wish them well from the bottom of our hearts.”

I have quoted these two opinions because they show how completely the Government of the day was out of touch with reality. The settlement of difficulties between ourselves, France, Russia and the United States was forced on us by German aggressiveness, yet Mr. Lloyd George proposed an Anglo-German Entente, and the populace swallowed the proposal. The steadily increasing power of the German Navy threatened our primary interests all over the world, yet in Mr. Churchill's opinion there was nothing to fight about.

Whilst politicians were floating along the zephyrs of popular opinion in place of attempting to grip the true under-currents of passing events, others watched fearfully the approaching storm. On July 20, 1908, Lord Cromer warned the Government that “ their

main duty was to make provision betimes for the European conflict which might not improbably be forced upon them before many years."

Since Mr. Haldane took charge of the War Office in 1905, this most notable of Secretaries of State for War since Lord Cardwell, busied himself in the complete re-organization of the land forces. Maintaining the Cardwell System inaugurated during 1868-1873 (which had virtually reduced the Home Forces to the level of Depot Units, a doubtful policy), he cut down the size of the army and shaping the balance left over produced an organized Expeditionary or Striking Force of six infantry and one cavalry divisions. In order to supplement the Regular Army the Old Militia was converted into a Special Reserve, and in order to create a second line for home defence the Volunteer and Yeomanry Forces were re-organised and became the Territorial Force. This Force was under no obligation to proceed overseas.

At the time, Mr. Haldane's reforms met with severe criticism chiefly because they upset the *status quo* and trampled on certain archaic traditions which were venerated on account of their antiquity rather than their usefulness. As a one-eyed man is king amongst the blind, Mr. Haldane was undoubtedly king over

most of his critics, all in fact save one—Lord Roberts, who with both eyes wide open plainly saw that a combination of the pugnacity of Germany and the pacifism of the rest of Europe were as flint and steel, and that one day, in the near future, these two would strike together and the result would be a European war in which six divisions of infantry would be but as a drop in the ocean. To-day the whole world knows that this illustrious soldier was right. At about this time he openly accused Germany of preparing for war, and urged the British Empire to make ready for the shock. On November 23, 1908, Lord Roberts spoke as follows in the House of Lords:—

“Hitherto I have failed to wake people up to my warnings against a danger that is all too obvious. If you, who ought to realise that our naval supremacy is being disputed, neglect to place this country in such a state of defence, as would make even the most powerful nation hesitate to attack it, I cannot help feeling that a terrible awakening may be in store for us at no very distant period . . . The Navy is not enough. The Territorial Army is too small and too untrained to cope with highly trained troops . . . There lies in front of us one of the strangest spectacles ever wit-

nessed. Within a few hours' steaming of our coasts, there is a people numbering over sixty millions, our most active rivals in commerce and the greatest military power in the world, adding to an overwhelming military strength a naval force which she is resolutely and rapidly increasing; while we are taking no military precautions in response. Germany cannot justly be blamed for the situation; rather, she should be praised and her example followed, for her people, by their industry, their perseverance, their sound system of education, and the military training which every able-bodied man receives, have made her a great nation. Words cannot express the responsibility which lies on the members of the Legislature. We are trustees for the future of the Empire. It is my absolute belief that, without a military organization more adequate to the certain perils of the future, our Empire will fall from us and our power will pass away."

The truth having been spoken, Lord Roberts was jeered at by Cabinet Ministers, laughed at by simple M.P.'s, reviled as a jingo and swashbuckler by the Liberal pacifist press, and attacked by the Adjutant General at the War Office.

The formation of the National Service

League was the outcome of Lord Robert's agitation. The proposals of this League, though they were never accepted by the Government, are still of interest. On July 22, 1912, they were defined by Lord Roberts in an address delivered at the Mansion House as follows:—

(i) A supreme Navy at least sixty per cent. superior to the next strongest navy.

(ii) A Regular Army as a police force to our Empire in peace time and a striking force in war.

(iii) A Home Army of such a character as will enable it to free the Navy and Regular Army from the duties of Home defence and at the same time provide a potential reserve to be utilized, should the regular troops overseas require reinforcing.

The training proposed by the League was as follows:—

(i) A continuous period of training of four months for infantry.*

(ii) A continuous period of training of not more than six months for the other arms.

(iii) The training of all able bodied youths between the ages of 18 and 21.

(iv) Initial training to be followed by three years' service in the Territorial Force.

* During the war of 1914-1918, this period was found sufficient.

Had Lord Roberts' proposals been adopted in 1907, by 1914 there would have been in the country:—

(i) 400,000 men of over 19 years of age in the Territorial Force all fairly well trained.

(ii) 300,000 men in the Territorial Force Reserve.

(iii) 150,000 recruits under training.

In all 850,000 officers, N.C.O.'s and men, or 1,000,000 if the strength of the Regular Army and Special Reserve be added to this figure. The cost of these proposals were estimated at £3,806,372, and the Territorial Force was costing £4,816,665. Together the two forces would have cost £8,623,037, eventually the Great War cost us in the neighbourhood of £8,000,000,000!

Our parsimony in national defence was at this period truly remarkable. Well might Lord Rosebery have once again exclaimed: "The heaviest peaceful expenditure . . . is much less costly than the smallest European War."

In place of welcoming the above proposals the General Staff severely criticised them in the Army Review.* We did not require an increase in the strength of our land forces, because all that the country need be prepared

* "Our Requirements for Home Defence." "The Army Review," Vol. III, July, 1912.

for was an invasion of 70,000 men. Further, our Expeditionary Force by helping our allies would render it difficult for an enemy to spare such a force for the purpose. No opinion was expressed as to the adequacy of six divisions to help our allies, or of the likelihood of its eventual reinforcement. This paper wound up by saying: "Until the Government tells us that our Expeditionary Force is too small to enable them to carry out a sound National Policy we must presume that it is sufficient for our requirements."

Whilst preparation for or against war was being stifled at home, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Emperor Francis Joseph came as a rude shock to European chanceries. Whilst the greater Powers talked, Serbia and Montenegro began to make war-like preparations. No sooner was this crisis at an end than Great Britain was confronted by another—the naval disclosures of the spring of 1909. "For the first time, the Estimates were defended by selecting Germany as the standard by which to measure our requirements; and British and German Dreadnoughts were balanced against each other down the vista of coming years."* In 1911, Germany it was found would have

* "The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy," Vol. III, p. 430.

13 Dreadnoughts to our 16, and 17 in the Autumn of 1912. "The Government, therefore, asked for power to build four extra ships . . . thus providing us with 20 to 17 in March, 1912. Mr. Balfour made his hearers' flesh creep by suggesting that our rival might possess 25 ships in 1912. The Prime Minister, while rejecting the exaggerations of the Leader of the Opposition, confessed that 17 ships in April, 1912, were a possibility, and 13 a certainty."*

"The effect produced by these speeches in the House of Commons was simply overwhelming. When Mr. Asquith sat down, no one rose to speak, and the vote would have been put from the Chair without further discussion, had not a well-known 'crank' caught the Speaker's eye. Mr. McKenna had indeed secured the safe passage of his Estimates, including the four contingent Dreadnoughts; but he had proved almost too much, and had created a first-class naval scare."†

To allay the panic which ensued, Mr. Churchill talked of "our tremendous margins of safety," and Mr. Lloyd George declared:—

* "The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy," Vol. III, p. 431.

† "Mr. Lloyd George and the War," Roch, p. 28.

"I predict that, even if the Budget goes through, another concerted effort will be made to rouse a fresh naval and military panic, so as to rush the Government into the criminal extravagance of unnecessary armaments by land and sea. There will be the usual crop of rumours about German plans and preparations. We know how little foundation existed for the last scare. In the light of established facts the fright which shook Britain and convulsed the Colonies looks rather foolish."

Whilst the army was being re-organized at home, preparations were made to hold another Imperialist Conference in 1909, on account of the secret acceleration of the German naval programme which gave rise to the opinion throughout the Empire that British naval supremacy was in danger. New Zealand, always patriotic, came forward with the offer of one or if necessary two Dreadnoughts, Australia also offered one, and Canada was willing to assume larger responsibilities of defence.

"After the conclusion of the Conference a statement was made by Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons, when he explained that 'after the main Conference at the Foreign Office, a Military Conference took place at the War Office and resulted in an

agreement on the fundamental principles set out in the papers prepared by the General Staff.' It was agreed that 'without impairing the complete control of the Government of each Dominion over the military forces raised within it, these forces should be standardized, the formation of units being as far as possible assimilated to those which have been recently worked out for the British Army.' He explained that 'the Military Conference then entrusted to a Sub-Conference, consisting of military experts at Headquarters and from the various Dominions, and presided over by Sir William Nicholson, acting for the first time in the capacity of Chief of the Imperial Staff, the duty of working out the detailed application of these principles.' He concluded his reference to Imperial Military Defence by remarking that 'complete agreement was reached by the members of the Sub-Conference and by the Committee of Imperial Defence, which sat for the purpose under the presidency of the Prime Minister,' the result being 'a plan for so organizing the forces of the Crown, wherever they are, that, while preserving the complete autonomy of each Dominion, should the Dominions desire to assist in the Defence of the Empire in a real emergency,

their forces could be rapidly combined into one homogeneous Imperial Army."*

The Imperial Conference of 1909 was the turning point from talk to work. Ever since 1902 discussions on the defence of the Empire had taken place, and now that the Home forces were in the throes of re-organization the Dominions fell in line and began to put their military houses in order. The lines they followed were very similar to those proposed by Lord Roberts—a small permanent establishment of regular soldiers, a territorial force and a cadet force. Between now and the outbreak of the Great War, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were busy building up their national armies. Lord Kitchener visited the first two Dominions and tendered to the military authorities his expert advice.

During this period of Imperial Reformation, Germany did not remain idle. She watched the gathering storm clouds with a fear mixed with contempt, and never let an opportunity, however trivial, slip by without seeking to establish a pretext of war before these clouds coalesced. Further than this, she established a system of peaceful penetration which directly menaced the tranquillity of the world. In

* "Unity of Control in Imperial Defence," Captain E. ff. W. Lascelles. "The Army Review," Vol. IV, April, 1913.

1909, she engineered the Casablanca incident; in 1911 the Agadir incident, and quite wrongfully gained control of a considerable portion of the French Congo. At length her pretext searching became almost comical. In 1913, on account of a Zeppelin having had to make a forced descent at Nancy, because someone in the crowd which the machine attracted scribbled an insulting inscription on her envelope, Germany created a political crisis! This same year, however, she divulged her one reason in this search after a pretext for war. In October, the King of the Belgians visited William II and General von Moltke at Luneburg, when a covered invitation was made that, as France was engineering a war, Belgium should fling herself into the arms of Germany and agree to German troops violating her neutrality.

The year 1911 saw further progress made in the consolidation of Imperial defence by the assembly of another Imperial Conference, at which for the first time in their history the representatives of the Dominions were brought into the closest personal touch with questions of foreign policy by being invited to attend the sittings of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Shortly after this Conference was dispersed a Naval War Staff was created.

Two further events took place in 1911 and

the beginning of 1912 which had a distinct bearing on the approaching conflagration. One was the seizure of Tripoli by Italy to avoid a German occupation of that country, and the other was Lord Haldane's visit to Berlin. The Tripoli campaign practically reduced the Triple Alliance to a Dual Alliance. To make good the loss Germany turned towards Turkey which country she had for long been courting.

In February, 1912, Lord Haldane visited Berlin at the request of the Kaiser. Simultaneously the Reichstag proposed an extensive increase in the German Army and Navy. Lord Haldane naturally asked what would be the use of negotiations aiming at friendly relations if at the same moment Germany was going to increase her fleet, such negotiations would provoke world-wide derision. "The Kaiser demanded a free hand for European conquests, at the price of a friendly understanding with England. England was asked to pledge herself to absolute neutrality in the event of Germany being engaged in war."* In fact Germany suggested that England should break her treaty obligations as she had done under the influence of Mr. Gladstone in 1864.

This frank statement of Germany's inten-

* "The Maintenance of Peace," S. C. Vestal, p. 526.

tion must have completely opened the eyes of Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister, yet in place of taking the whole Empire into his confidence he did not divulge Germany's intention until some time after the battle of the Marne! "Why," writes Lieut.-Colonel Vestal, "the Government withheld from the public the disclosures to Lord Haldane and countenanced the denunciations of Lord Roberts and took no decisive steps to place England in a better posture for defence is simply inexplicable . . . England's only hope of peace was in making preparations sufficient to deter Germany from breaking the peace, and in convincing Germany that she was ready to use all her forces in certain contingencies."*

There could no longer now be any doubt of Germany's intentions. In December, 1912, the Triple Alliance was renewed; in March, 1913, in order to strengthen her army, a levy of 1,000,000,000 marks was made on the German taxpayers, and in the new Military Law then brought in may be found the following passages:—

"The people must be made accustomed to the belief that an offensive war on our part is a necessity, for the purpose of combating the provocations of the adversary.

* "The Maintenance of Peace," S. C. Vestal, p. 529.

"Affairs must be handled in such a manner that, under the pressure of powerful armaments, enormous sacrifices and a critical political situation, the beginning of hostilities will be considered as a deliverance."^{*}

The Balkan conflicts of 1912-1913 undoubtedly precipitated these measures, they pointed to one definite end—war!

* "French Yellow Book of 1914 on the European War," pp. 10, 11.

VI.

The Climax of Unpreparedness

AT length the pretext hunt ceased on June 28, 1914, at Serajevo, where the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife the Duchess of Hohenburg were assassinated. On July 22, Sir Edward Grey, then Foreign Secretary, asked Germany to take into account Serbia's national dignity. "Serbia's national dignity," wrote the Kaiser, "does not exist! The question has nothing to do with Grey; it is his Majesty Francis Joseph's affair. What gigantic British impudence!"* On the 24th, Germany repudiated any idea of an international intervention. On the 27th, Austria, determining that Serbia should not escape her, presented an ultimatum which resulted in war being declared between these two countries on the 28th. It was on the day this ultimatum was presented that for the first time the Cabinet turned from the crisis in Ireland and began to consider "British inter-

* "Die deutschen Dokumente, etc." No. 374.

ests and obligations in the event of a European war."* On the 29th, Russia, who was as firmly determined to support Serbia as Austria was to crush her, began to mobilise, and on the same day Germany proposed to the British Government that she should be allowed a free hand to violate Belgium's neutrality and annex the French colonies: she was much taken aback when this amazing demand, which should have opened the eyes of all concerned to her ultimate intention, was refused. Simultaneously she demanded the cessation of Russian mobilization, and issued her famous proclamation of *drohende Kriegsgefahr*.

On the 31st, M. Jules Cambon, French Ambassador at Berlin, telegraphed as follows to Paris: "The hesitating attitude of the British Government is of a nature that may lead to the most terrible consequences, for here in Berlin they have the greatest hopes of success in a struggle against France and Russia alone . . ." M. Paul Cambon, French Ambassador at London, communicated the contents of this telegram to the Foreign Secretary, who informed him that Parliament could not be pledged in advance. "Up to the present," so he said, "we did not feel that any treaties or obligations were involved . . . He repeated his

* "The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy," Vol. III, p. 493.

question; whether we would help France if Germany attacked her. I said we could not take any engagement."*

This refusal to state definitely the intention of the Government was followed by a personal appeal from the President to the King. On August 1 His Majesty replied: "As to the attitude of my country events are changing so rapidly that it is difficult to forecast future developments; but you may be assured that my Government will continue to discuss freely and frankly any point which might arise of interest to our two nations with M. Cambon." This "was a polite but perfectly definite refusal to promise assistance, which reflected the mind neither of the King nor the Foreign Office, but represented the makeshift of a divided Cabinet."*

Whilst this correspondence was taking place, Sir Edward Grey asked the French and German Governments whether in the event of war they would respect the neutrality of Belgium. France at once agreed to do so, whilst the German Foreign Secretary refused to reply, for to do so would reveal the German plan of campaign. Thereupon Sir Edward Grey read to Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador, the following message which

* "The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy," Vol. III, p. 500.

had been unanimously agreed upon by the Cabinet : —

“ The reply of the German Government is a matter of very great regret, because the neutrality of Belgium does affect feeling in this country. If Germany could see her way to give a positive reply as France has done, it would materially contribute to relieve anxiety and tension here; while, if there were a violation by one combatant while the other respected it, it would be extremely difficult to restrain public feeling.”

This warning having been read, the German Ambassador very naturally asked whether we should remain neutral if Belgian territory were not violated. “ I replied,” says Sir Edward Grey, “ that I could not say that. Our hands were still free. Our attitude would be largely determined by public opinion, and the neutrality of Belgium would appeal to it very strongly. I did not think we could give a promise of neutrality on that condition alone.”

Events were however moving onwards completely outside the control of Parliamentary action, or lack of action. On August 2, the rising popular opinion against Germany

backed by the strong support of the Opposition in the House of Commons magnitized the Government to take action. The French Ambassador was informed that: "If the German Fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against French coasts or shipping the British Fleet will give all the protection in its power." Then as a modification was added: "This assurance is, of course, subject to the policy of the Government receiving the support of Parliament, and must not be taken as binding the Government to take any action until the above contingency of action by the German Fleet takes place."

This half-hearted decision, the first the Cabinet had made since the crisis arose, was largely due to a letter from the Leader of the Opposition, which was delivered to the Cabinet whilst this answer was being formulated; it read as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Asquith,

Lord Lansdowne and I feel it our duty to inform you that in our opinion, as well as in that of all the colleagues whom we have been able to consult, it would be fatal to the honour and security of the United Kingdom to hesitate in supporting France and Russia at the present juncture, and we offer our unhesitating support to the Gov-

ernment in any measures they may consider necessary for that object.

Yours very truly,
A. BONAR LAW."

On the following day, August 3, Sir Edward Grey, in his speech in the House of Commons, openly stated that the peace of Europe could no longer be maintained. Among other things he said: "My own feeling is that, if a foreign fleet, engaged in a war which France has not sought, came down the Channel and bombarded the undefended coast of France, we could not stand aside. France was entitled to know at once, whether in the event of attack on her unprotected northern and western coasts she could count on British support, and I therefore gave the promise yesterday to the French Ambassador. It was not a Declaration of War."

Mr. Bonar Law promised the support of the Opposition; Mr. Redmond assured the Government that their troops might be withdrawn from Ireland, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald "declared for neutrality on the ground that the speech had not persuaded him that the country was in danger!"

This day Germany declared war on France and presented an ultimatum to Belgium demanding passage through that country. The following day a British protest was despatched against

this ultimatum, but before a reply could be received the Belgian frontier had been crossed. At last a pretext had been found, and at midnight on August 4 war was declared on Germany.

The period which separates the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, on June 28, and the declaration of war, on August 4, is a peculiarly interesting one in British history. Ever since 1864, a few clear-sighted persons had watched with dismay the rise of Prussia. Ever since 1900, a large and ever increasing number of people had distinctly seen that the creation of a powerful German fleet must inevitably lead to war with England. The annihilation of France was not the object of Germany, it was only a stepping stone towards it, namely, the dominion of the whole of Europe, if not of the entire globe. The only obstacle which stood in her way was the British fleet, which not only protected the frontiers of the Empire but the sea communications of the World.

From the year 1902 onwards two strong undercurrents swirl through the depths of our history. The one is an almost unconscious feeling that the Empire is in danger and that we must prepare for war; the other is political pacifism which simultaneously checked preparations, and by checking them stimulated dis-

cussion. So blind, wilfully or otherwise, was the Liberal Government to the reality of events, that not until July 27, 1914, exactly one month after the Archduke was assassinated, and exactly nine days before the greatest war in our history was declared, did the Cabinet begin to prepare to meet the approaching storm which gloomed over Europe.

"On Saturday, August 1," declared Mr. Lloyd George in an interview in 1915, "a poll of the electors would have shown 99 per cent. against embroiling their country in hostilities. A poll on the following Tuesday would have resulted in a vote of 99 per cent. in favour of war. The revolution in public sentiment was attributable entirely to an attack by Germany on a small and unprotected country which had done her no wrong, and what Britain was not prepared to do for interests political and commercial she readily risked to help the weak and helpless. I would not have been a party to a Declaration of War had Belgium not been invaded, and I think I can say the same for most if not all of my colleagues."*

This confession is as illuminating as it is amazing and naïve. Why was the popular brain so unstable? Because for nearly ten

* "Pearson's Magazine," March, 1915.

years the Liberal Government had preached pacifism, and had never explained to the people the dangers which menaced them. Why would the Government have refused to have declared war had Belgium not been invaded? Because there was no grand strategical organ in existence which could formulate a war policy for the Empire. The Government dreaded war because it felt itself incapable, as eventually it proved to be, of directing its course or of controlling its forces. Nearer the truth, a good deal nearer, was Mr. Lloyd George when, on December 23, 1920, he said of the nine days which preceded the outbreak of the war: "No one at the head of affairs quite meant war at that stage, it was something into which they glided, or rather staggered and stumbled."

Had we been better prepared, had we possessed not necessarily more men and more ships, but a strategical brain which could have advised the Government, the war might well have been averted. On July 25, M. Sazonof declared to the British Ambassador in Petrograd that if England took her stand firmly with France and Russia there would be no war. About the same time the Tsar said: "Unless Germany has lost her reason she would not dare to attack Russia, France and England," and President Wilson was of the

same opinion. On July 31, President Poincaré declared to the British Ambassador in Paris: "If England would support France war might be averted. Sir Edward Grey believed that such a course would be regarded by the Germanic allies as a menace. The saddest thing in history is the fact that Sir Edward failed to perceive that the occasion demanded a menace."*

We were under an obligation of honour to support France, yet we refused to say whether we would or would not do so. We drifted on like a rudderless ship. We would not tell France whether we would take part in the war even if Belgium were invaded; neither would we tell Germany, nor would we tell Russia. We depressed the spirit of France, we exalted the spirit of Germany, and we perplexed the spirit of Russia by our want of decision. If we had spoken out manfully, France would have been heartened by our support, Germany might well have restrained, in place of urging on, Austria, and Russia might have ceased to challenge Vienna.

The war from start to finish was pre-eminently a war between Germany and England. We could not see this because we were blind. We possessed neither strategical eye nor brain. Our blindness led the whole

* "The Maintenance of Peace," S. C. Vestal, p. 537.

Empire, willy nilly, into the maelstroem, and it will do so again, unless we open our eyes and create a strategical brain which can think of war as a political instrument. A brain which can instruct those who attempt to dodge the fury of war, of its nature, its causes, and how its outbreak can be restricted.

VII.

The Value of Past History

AS I stated in the preface, my object in writing this brief history was simply to provide the reader with an introduction to the present problems of Imperial defence. I do not intend, therefore, to go beyond this goal, but before closing the book I think it may be of interest to draw a comparison between the past and the present.

One of the first things the reader should bear in mind is, that great wars arise out of definite causes which are constantly repeating themselves, and that the most important of these causes is the search after a secure frontier so that prosperity at home may be safe-guarded. The Greeks under Alexander searched for this elusive line; the Romans searched for it under many leaders and found it for a period. In modern times, Napoleon sought it by pushing the frontiers of France eastwards, thus he hoped to secure France against attack. When this became doubtful he hoped by establishing the "Confederacy of the Rhine" to create a buffer state between France and Prussia. Only the other day

William II sought for this ideal of security, and not only eastwards and westwards on land, but in all directions at sea. As his fleet threatened the frontiers of the British Empire, war was inevitable, not because France and Russia were threatened but because the British Empire was threatened. This, in my opinion, was the fundamental cause of the Great War—the threat offered by Germany to the security of the British sea coasts. Had Germany been able to defeat France and Russia, she would have absorbed Denmark, Holland, Belgium and the northern coast of France to the mouth of the Seine, so that twenty years later she could challenge the British Empire to mortal combat.

In 1815, French land and sea power were destroyed; France was decisively defeated. In 1918, German sea-power was destroyed, but, because of the Armistice, the German military will was not destroyed, and the war spirit of the German people was not annihilated. This could only have been accomplished had war been carried into Germany, and an unconditional surrender demanded in Berlin. The result of the Armistice was that the war on land was never won. The Allies, in 1918, gained a physical but not a psychological victory. They seriously wounded the German war body, but they did not des-

troy the German war spirit, and the result was that Germany retired from the combat to nurse her wounds and meditate upon revenge. The Armistice of 1918 secured the frontiers of the British Empire, but it did not secure the eastern frontiers of France. The only country which won her objective in the war was Great Britain. France never won her's. The result of this has been that ever since November, 1918, France has attempted to rectify the colossal mistake of the Armistice by establishing a new "Confederacy of the Rhine," a buffer state which will secure the French frontier. Thus we see that psychologically for France the Great War has not yet ended. To-day France is still mentally at war with Germany, and, for her, the Treaty of Versailles is potentially but a scrap of paper. We are at peace with Germany, we are a neutral country trading with Germany, consequently it can readily be seen that our outlook and that of France are unlikely to coincide.

The pathos of all this lies in the fact that we all desire peace, but we do not know how to establish it. We are all looking for secure frontiers, but unfortunately we find them already occupied by threatening bayonets and worse. If we can occupy them we shall be secure, but if we can only occupy them by

fighting for them, this is the crux of the whole question. What is its solution?

If we consult history we shall find that, in the past, peace has been attained, or partially attained, by two systems both based on fear. The first is the religious system, and the second the political. In the Middle Ages, through a threat to withhold the joys of heaven, and, consequently, to establish the terrors of hell (there was no alternative) the Pope could frequently persuade, or terrify, would-be breakers of the peace not to break it. The second system is that of the balance of power which, to all readers of Lieut. Colonel Vestal's admirable book "The Maintenance of Peace," has proved itself not an absolute guarantee against war but a very practical one.

The difficulty of establishing this balance is never greater than after a Great War, because its *raison d'être* vanishes with victory. It is the threat of one or more of the great Powers to upset peace which is the foundation of this balance. This threat causes those threatened to band together in alliance against the threatener. Without a direct threat to the existence of two or more nations, I doubt very much whether a true alliance is possible. In 1913, Italy was a partner in the Triple Alliance, but, in 1914, she did not fulfil the

terms of her agreement, because her life was not threatened. To-day, though the Entente still exists between us and France, the incentive for its existence really expired the day Germany surrendered to us her High Sea Fleet. If to-day the Entente were fortified on paper by being replaced by a definite alliance with France (and the Locarno Treaties almost accomplish this) this would be no guarantee that, in the event of war—even a war with Germany—we should support France, unless this war threatened our existence. In 1864, by treaty, we guaranteed ourselves to support the Danes, but, when it came to the question of war, we did not support them, because we did not feel that our existence was affected. All this may be very immoral and selfish, but human nature is human nature, and we cannot change it by a signature. All nations are at heart peacefully disposed, and they love peace so long as they feel themselves secure, and when this feeling does not exist they will go to any extreme in order to establish it.

After Waterloo the balance of power vanished. We retired behind our sea wall, our unattackable frontier, and the most formidable land power—Russia—with probably the best intentions in the world, tried to guarantee perpetual peace on earth by the establishment of the Holy Alliance. I have already dealt

with this Alliance, and all that I will here say is that the system this Alliance proposed to employ was coercion by brute force. A moral papacy was to be created supported by a standing army, and whosoever disagreed with the morality preached was going to be "for it." Who was going to control this force? The Holy Alliance, a paper super-power with no foundations! Why no foundations? Because it was based on the opinion of royalties and statesmen whose power depended on the will of their respective peoples. In fact they only held office in virtue of majority votes. If majorities would not vote for them, the Alliance would be dissolved, and majorities think of their own security before they think of universal peacefulness, and are not over apt in declaring war on another nation, however much it may deserve a thrashing, if they do not see their own security threatened. The Holy Alliance, after doing a great deal of harm, died a natural death, because it was a mortal organization depending on the free will of nations.

After the Armistice of 1918 the balance of power again vanished. Unfortunately, so I think, we did not retire behind our sea wall, but became entangled in the New Holy Alliance—the League of Nations. The establishment of this League was the idea of the

strongest land power, the United States; but, eventually, when level-headed people in America saw clearly where it would lead, they cast off their moorings and sailed in the opposite direction. They did what we did after 1815. In place, we became members of the League, and on our back was foisted various mandatory territories which have already cost us scores of millions of pounds. Worse still, not only because we are a member are we unable to dictate terms to the squabblers in Europe, for be it remembered, financially we are the leading power in the Old World, but the very terms we have bound ourselves to support are diametrically opposed to the principles whereon our Empire has been born and nurtured. In the past our policy has been to establish domestic peace, and to grant self-government to such Colonies and portions of the Empire which could of their own accord maintain it. Self-determination is the antithesis of this policy; not only has it been used to split Europe up into nations without economic resources or military frontiers, but it has had a disruptive effect in Ireland, Egypt and India. Self-determination of peoples who cannot guarantee their own domestic peace is synonymous with anarchy. Central and Eastern Europe are now organized on an anarchical

system, and the British Empire is full of social volcanoes. Self-determination of the order preached by the late President Wilson has already done us more harm than even the Germans did us during the whole period of the Great War, yet, ironical as it may seem, self-determination of nations *who can determine their own security* has been a governing principle of British rule.

Not content with abandoning principles (I) and (V) as laid down in Chapter I,* at the Washington Disarmament Conference, by agreeing to a one power naval standard we have abrogated principle (IV), and by doing so, not only have we undermined principle (III), but we have rendered it next to impossible to carry out principle (II). All these changes in the policy which has controlled the evolution of the Empire may be right, and it is not my purpose here to criticise them. But whether they are right or wrong, what I, and I think also the reader would like to know, for it concerns every citizen of the Empire, is: If this policy is to be scrapped what policy is to replace it? Between 1588 and 1914 five great principles have controlled our evolution.

* Namely: (i) The establishment of domestic peace; (ii) The maintenance of the balance of power; (iii) The establishment of secure frontiers; (iv) The maintenance of command of the sea; (v) The self-government of self-controllable Colonies.

Are these principles now obsolete? If so they must be replaced by others, and by what?

We all desire peace and gasp for prosperity. Is the League of Nations going to give us either? Is Europe organised to give us either? Is she not now full of small irritable nations without economic constitution and without secure frontiers? As long as this state exists our trade is going to be the shuttlecock of every international breeze, and we are going to continue to maintain over a million human beings at home in the worst form of slavery—unemployment, Is the League of Nations going to guarantee the peace of Europe without using coercive force? If it is going to use force, then it must follow in the footsteps of the Holy Alliance, and establish not an international police force but an all-powerful army, navy and air force. For example, if the League of Nations is going to embrace all the nations of the world, and France becomes truculent, what will it require in order to lick France into shape? For example, if the League disagrees with Bolshevism (which theoretically is also founded on self-determination), what force will be required to bring Russia to her senses, and will the Uruguayians feel inclined to pay towards the cost? For example, if we in England do not agree with the League, are we going to be kept in order

by Bolivians, Slovaks, Portuguese and such like, all worthy people in their own geographical areas, but when without them international mercenaries? Is any nation going to pay to be tormented by weird and unintelligible noises, and to them curious, if not disgusting, customs? This idea might form the plot of an amusing comedy, but as a political instrument it is impossible!

Can not we do better than this, and replace this inverted humanitarian conception by something more common-sense? I believe we can. We can get behind our sea wall and establish a League of British Nations—the Empire on a securer footing than it has ever been established before. It is not a force of Condottieri which will keep this League intact, but the fear of national extinction of all members of the League if any one is destroyed. In this League not only can we count on fear to hold us together, but also on affection. It is no ordinary league but a Brotherhood, and it is the growth of this Brotherhood in the past that I have outlined, and it is the continuation of its existence which is the most important question of the day. It is in fact—
THE QUESTION WHICH SHOULD INTEREST
US ALL.